

Success Story  
**Thwarted Sexual Abuse Attempt**  
Capable Partners Program (CAP) II, USAID

With the support of Associação Moçambicana Mulher e Educação's (AMME) behavior change program, girls like Lila Américo Lemos are gaining skills to "say no" or to report cases or attempted sexual abuse perpetrated by teachers and others. Lila is currently attending tenth grade in Eduardo Mondlane Secondary School and lives in Zambezia province. While attending the ninth grade in 2010, Lila was the victim of an attempted sexual assault perpetrated by her teacher. The following story comes from Lila herself:

"We were at the end of the first quarter of classes when my teacher decided to announce the quarterly average grades of all students, except mine. When I asked why, he said that he didn't have any record of my test grades and that the actual tests must either be lost or at his house. I was stunned because I had completed all of the tests and did not understand why my grades were not on record.

Since I had copies of all the tests at home, I told the teacher that I could bring them to school so that my grades would go on record. He said that he wouldn't be at school that week so if I wanted to solve my problem I would have to go to his house. When I told him that issues related to school should be resolved in school, he said that if I didn't want to go to his home I would continue to not have any grades on record. Even though I was crying, I could not convince him to change his mind and accepted his proposal to take the tests to his home. Still, I was not comfortable with all the reasons he provided. How was it possible that only my grades were not recorded? And why should I have to take the tests to his home rather than bring them to school?

Some time ago, I joined some debates led by AMME on behavior change for HIV prevention, which included sessions on sexual harassment and its link to HIV & AIDS. One thing that struck me from these debates was when I learned that I should "say no" and/or tell someone older or trustworthy whenever an adult made a lewd request. For me, participating in this program was important because I could see immediately that the teacher was trying to find a way to be alone with me. So, I told my parents. My father said that if the teacher did not want to address the issue at school there was something more to it. My mother was afraid that I would fail my grade, or that this teacher would influence other teachers to fail me as well.

In the early hours of the following morning, my father and I went to the teacher's home. When we arrived, I asked permission to enter the house and he answered the door in shorts and slippers, no shirt, and a towel thrown over his shoulder. Obviously he did not know I was there with my father, which came as a great surprise. He asked why I was there with my father. My father replied that he was only there to see up close for himself what was going on with my tests and why none of my grades were recorded. My teacher explained that there was no situation, and no need for me to come with my father, as we could solve the issue together. My teacher then registered my grades based on the copies of the tests I had brought, gave me back the register to take to the school, and repeated that there was no reason for my father to come with me.

The following week in school he saw me in the cafeteria and said 'It's great having a father, but some people rely on their fathers to solve their problems for them.' But for me, the most important thing was that I could protect myself by taking my father with me to my teacher's home. And I advise all girls like me to always be safe and report to their elders about any behaviors that make them feel uncomfortable."